

520 Remarks at Homestead Air Force Base, Florida. Upon
Presenting Unit Awards. November 26, 1962

Gentlemen:

I want to express our great appreciation to you on behalf of the people of the United States, to all of you who have taken part in the activities which have made it possible for the United States to defend its security in very difficult times.

I may say, gentlemen, that you take excellent pictures, and I've seen a good many of them. And beginning with the photographs which were taken on the weekend in the middle of October, which first gave us conclusive proof of the buildup of offensive weapons in Cuba, through the days that have followed to the present time, the work of these two units has contributed as much to the security of the United States as any units in our history, and any group of men in our history.

We are an open society, and all that we have is, in a sense, available to the world. We are in a struggle, though we do not wish it we accept it, with a closed system. Therefore, the ability to detect those developments which directly threaten our security or those nations associated with us—this ability is es-

sential to our survival, to the maintenance of our security and vital interests, and, in a very real sense, to the maintenance of peace.

So I think that you gentlemen can take every satisfaction in what you are doing, what you have done, and in what you will do. We are very much indebted to you. And we are particularly indebted to Major Anderson, who was a member of one of these wings, who was the only casualty of the last few weeks, but who is symbolic, I think, of the willingness of a good many Americans to take great hazards on behalf of their country. We are very much indebted to you all.

NOTE: The President spoke following an inspection tour of the Air Force base. Outstanding unit awards were presented to the 468th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, SAC, which took the original high level photographs of Soviet missile sites in Cuba, and to the 363d Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, TAC, which followed up the discovery of the missile sites with detailed photographs taken while flying at great speed at tree-top levels.

In his closing remarks the President referred to Air Force Major Rudolf Anderson, Jr., Greenville, S.C., pilot of a U-2 reconnaissance plane lost over Cuba on October 27, 1962.